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IN THE EGYPTIAN DESERT.

ALMOST everything relating to Egypt is of undying interest. Its vast antiquity, its colossal monuments, its strange history, its mystic religions, its peculiar physical characteristics, have each and all formed the subject of investigation by the scholar, the antiquary, and the naturalist. Once the centre of learning and religion to the civilised world, it has, by the strange mutations of time and chance, become transformed into a kind of charnel-house, where the dead are more remarkable than the living, and where the relics of a past age supersede in interest the living attractions of the present. The ancient race of men, whose figures still adorn their crumbling sepulchres, and whose mummified remains are scattered broadcast throughout Europe and America, have passed off the active stage of life, and their place has been taken by a new people, whose condition of servitude is in affecting contrast to the grandeur and glory of the old possessors of the land.

To that land itself there is attached a peculiar interest. In its physical characteristics, it stands alone among the nations. A rainless country, whose soil would soon be transmuted into endless wastes of drifting sand, but that its river, the mysterious Nile, periodically rises and overflows its banks, leaving athwart its course a stretch of submerged country, which, when the waters once more retire to their wonted channel, is found to have become fertilised and enriched, ready to 'scatter plenty o'er a smiling land.' But this tract of cultivated and cultivable soil bears but a small proportion to the boundless areas of desert and wilderness, extending to thousands of square miles, which lie beyond the valley of the Nile. These deserts are mere wastes of blown sand, with rarely a pile of grass to refresh the weary eye, and scarcely a living thing to be seen for miles, except the hungry vulture that follows in the track of the caravan, as the shark is said to swim in the wake of the doomed vessel. Little is known of this wild and weird wilderness, 'a land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought

and of the shadow of death, a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt.' Any authentic information, therefore, which comes to us on the subject is necessarily of interest, as few travellers have chosen to explore these forbidding byways of African travel. One of those few is General R. E. Colston, an American officer, for nearly six years in the military service of Ismail Pacha, Khedive of Egypt, and who has given an account of his experiences in those deserts, through the medium of a lecture to the American Geographical Society, as published in their Proceedings.

General Colston did not visit these districts as a mere tourist, but as an explorer, student, and observer. His immediate and official object, indeed, was to make a scientific survey of particular districts, and to examine certain ancient gold mines worked by the Egyptians before the Christian era. His first expedition was from Cairo to Kenneh on the Nile, by steamer, about four hundred miles. Thence he passed across to the Eastern Græco-Roman city of Berenice on the Red Sea, where he remained exploring the shores for three months. From this place he proceeded to explore the Eastern Desert, and especially the ancient gold mines of Wady Allaki; thence to Berber on the Nile, then to Abou Hamed, whence he traversed the great desert of Korosko across the bend of the Nile. In a second expedition, he crossed the western deserts from about the same point to the province of Kordofan. Here he was prostrated by sun-stroke, and partially paralysed, and lay six months at Obeyad, in what was supposed to be a dying condition. At the end of this time, he was transported twelve hundred miles in a camel litter across two great deserts, till he reached Suakim on the Red Sea, whence he was conveyed by ship to Suez. This outline of his journeys, which can be traced on any map of Africa, will render his description of the routes travelled more intelligible.

To his powers of great and accurate observation, General Colston adds those of literary skill in the statement and description of what he saw, the

places explored being represented in his lecture with a vividness and force of characterisation which bring the scenes before us as in a picture. He begins by referring to what is to be seen in the sail of four hundred miles up the Nile to Kenneh, the starting-point of his first desert-journey. 'Sometimes the valley of the Nile expands like a green carpet on either side, with its rich harvests, its whitening cotton, its green sugar-canes and waving palms, in the midst of which sits embowered here and there a native village, with its quaint pigeon-houses and its lonely minaret. Further up, under the fig-trees and mimosas, shines in the magic moonlight of Egypt the white dome which covers the tomb of a Mussulman saint. As we pass the villages at sunrise and sunset, we see long files of veiled women in their dark-blue robes, their water-jars gracefully poised on their heads, coming down to fill them at the river-bank, and then walking away with a grace and stateliness astonishing in mere peasants. At other points the utterly barren hills of the Arabian and Libyan chains come down to the very water's edge, and nought is to be seen but the most dreary and desolate desert, without a blade of grass, or a sign of human or animal life—nothing but the rugged red or yellow cliffs, with the heated air visibly quivering on their surface under the fierce rays of the African sun. Then, again, on one shore or the other, sometimes on both at once, the mountains recede for a mile or two; and as the panorama unrolls itself before us, we see majestic temples and ruins, pyramids and obelisks, flitting before our fascinated gaze; to be succeeded in turn by the huge and prosaic chimneys of some of the Khedive's great sugar-refineries.'

Then follow the arrangements for the land-journey. The Sheik and Bedouins who are to guide them on their explorations are selected, the necessary riding and baggage camels provided, with other fifty camels carrying water in skins slung over their backs; and then, after much strong language on the part of the drivers, and loud groans and protestations from the camels as they receive their respective loads, the huge caravan begins its journey through the wide, monotonous waste of sand.

'The moment we leave the banks of the Nile, we enter a world entirely strange and new—a waterless land, without rivers, creeks, rivulets, or springs; nothing but scanty and more or less brackish wells, at long intervals; and in the mountainous regions, some natural rocky reservoirs, where the rare rain-water collects in the brief and uncertain rainy season.' When the writer crossed the Eastern Desert in the fall of 1873, there had been no rain for three years; so that the first thing to be provided in starting was a supply of water sufficient to last from the Nile to the first well, and then from each well to the next.

In carrying the water, the natives employ exclusively goat and ox skins. When a goat is killed, they cut off his head and his legs at the hocks and knees; and after splitting the skin a short way down his breast, turn him out of his jacket by pulling it off like a stocking. After the hide is cured, the legs are tightly tied up, leaving only the neck open; and thus a large bottle is formed capable of holding from six to ten gallons

according to the size of the defunct goat. These water-skins, called *girbehs*, after a few days' use, keep the water very sweet. In the excessive heat of the desert, however, they lose a great quantity of their contents by evaporation. Military trains, in addition, are supplied with flattened zinc barrels, whose shape is adapted for hanging to the pack-saddles. These have screw stoppers, which prevent all leakage and evaporation. The water carried in the *girbehs* in the sun, gets quite warm, and that in the zinc barrels almost boils. As soon, therefore, as the traveller gets to camp, a portion of water is poured out into open skins, and hung on tripods in the shade; when, in the course of half an hour it becomes drinkable, and by midnight is as cold as fresh spring-water.

As a consequence, water in the desert is a very precious possession; for should the traveller find that the well on which he relied has gone dry, it may mean death to him in one of its cruellest forms. In that waterless land, therefore, even the pious Arab abstains from his religious ablutions before prayer, his law permitting him in such a case to wash his hands and feet with sand. As a rule, the water found in the scattered wells is very bad. 'The first thing on arriving at a well is to taste its water, and every one takes a sip, rolling it in his mouth and testing it, as epicures do rare wines. Great is the joy if it is pronounced "sweet water;" but when the guides say "not good," you know it is a strong solution of Epsom salts.'

The writer has some interesting observations on the camel. The specimens, he says, to be seen in the zoological collections of Europe and America are very poor, and give us little knowledge of him except his ungainly and unsymmetrical appearance, his gawky and lumbering gait. These are mostly Tartar or Syrian camels, with large frames, big heads and necks, coarse legs, and long hair, adapted for protection against the cold winters of Syria, Persia, and Tartary. General Colston calls the Arabian camel 'the most wondrously curious animal that God ever made.' Arabia has produced the best breed of these animals, which differs greatly from the Bactrian or Tartary camel. The Arabian camel has but one hump, and seldom exceeds nine feet to the top of it. His proper home is the desert. In richer lands, where food is very abundant, he becomes larger and coarser, and loses his most valuable quality, that of being able to live on little food, and of passing many days without any water at all. The camel and the dromedary are the same animal, differing only in breed, as the cart-horse differs from the race-horse. The dromedary corresponds to the latter, and is used to ride on. He is distinguished by his small head and ears, slim neck, and especially slender and wiry legs. With no load but his rider, water-skin, and a little food, he may travel a hundred miles a day for four or five days without injury. On an emergency, he can even go one hundred and fifty miles a day, a stress, however, which renders the poor animal useless afterwards. The burden-camel, corresponding to our dray or cart-horse, carries a load of four hundred pounds, and walks two and a half miles an hour, regularly as a clock. He is coarser, heavier, and slower than the dromedary.

The complaints which have been made of the difficulty of riding a camel—of the headache and

nausea it causes—proceed, in the writer's opinion, from travellers who do not know how to ride him. After the rider has once mastered the art of mounting and dismounting, there is no further trouble; and any one accustomed to horse-back may, in the General's opinion, learn in a single day to ride and manage the camel. 'He is the most docile and manageable of all animals, excepting only the Egyptian donkey.' The simple art of easy camel-riding consists chiefly in not permitting your camel to walk, except in deep sand, or over steep rocky ground, where you cannot help it. 'There is not a more back-breaking, skin-abrading motion than a camel's walk; but if you press him into a gentle pace, which is the natural gait of a dromedary, he moves both legs on the same side together. Thus he will go all day, with perfect ease to you, and no fatigue to himself, at the rate of about five miles an hour. In that gait his motion feels exactly like that of a very easy trotting horse, though, of course, camels are like horses, some moving easier than others. With every increase of the rapidity of his gait, he goes rougher.' The higher speed of the dromedary enables the traveller to ride on in advance, and take two or three rests in the course of the day, in order to allow the slower burden-camels to come up. But they all camp together at night.

To turn from the camel to the inhabitants of the country, the writer notices that as you ascend the Nile the population become darker in complexion; but it is not till the limits of Nubia are passed, that people with negro characteristics begin to be found. The Bedoween or Bedouins are the inhabitants of the deserts. Their wealth is in flocks and camels, and no consideration can induce them to move into fertile places and work the ground. They act as carriers and camel-drivers, and often suffer great privation; yet the freedom of the desert is more precious to them than the plenty of the settlements, and they look down with unutterable scorn upon the inhabitants of towns, whom they contemptuously call 'dwellers among bricks.' 'Their condition at the present day is very much like their ancestors in the days of Abraham and Lot and Ishmael, and their customs have changed but little since that time. Each tribe is governed in an absolutely patriarchal way by its sheik.' The subjects of some of these sheiks number as many as seventy thousand souls.

The Arabs divide their deserts into two kinds. The first they call wildernesses, being diversified by valleys or water-courses, where their flocks can wander and find pasture. The second is the *atmour*, or desert proper, consisting of hard gravel, diversified by zones of deep sands, rocky belts, and rugged defiles. 'It is absolutely and entirely destitute of all vegetation. Not a tree, not a bush, not a blade of grass relieves the eyes, which are painfully affected by the fierce reflection of the sunlight upon the yellow sand. No shade whatever is to be found, unless it is cast by some great rock. These *atmours*, generally nine or ten days' journey across, are like oceans, which you may traverse on your four-footed ship, but where you may not tarry, and where caravans cross each other like vessels on the ocean.'

Here is a picture of a desert journey, with its terrible privations and experiences: 'It is now

May 1875. The sun has again crossed the line, and is shining vertically over our heads. We are on the west of the Nile, on the desolate *atmours* which separate the river from the hardly less barren plains of Kordofan. A more parched, blasted, and blighted country than it is at this period, cannot be conceived. It is the end of the dry season, and half of the rare wells are exhausted; and those which are not, furnish only a scanty supply of brackish water at temperatures of eighty degrees or more. The deeper the wells, the warmer the water. The marches are perfectly terrible, and yet it is worse to halt during the day than to keep moving; for under the tents the heat redoubles as in a hothouse, making it impossible to rest or sleep. Thus we march from earliest dawn often till night; for we must make the distance between the wells before our water gives out. On the burning sand the sun beats down with a fierceness which cannot be described. The barrel of your gun, the stirrup of your saddle, blister your hand and your foot. The thermometer rises to a hundred and fifty degrees in the sun; and in spite of the protection of your white helmet, a heavy silk scarf over it, and the umbrella you carry, your skin peels off in blisters, and your brain almost boils in your skull.'

Deserts such as Korosko and Shégré, which are nine or ten days across, seem to be all but bereft of animal life. 'The ostrich,' says our author, 'and hyena cross them swiftly by night, and the ever-present vulture wings his ceaseless flight over them. No one can realise the combination of complete silence, solitude, and infinite space, who has not been in those deserts. When night comes, and the Bedouins are all asleep in their bivouacs, walk away from the camp in the unequalled moonlight of Africa, beyond the first ridge of sand or rock: around you stretches an immense sea-like horizon. The sand gleams almost as white as snow in the moon's rays. Not a sound falls upon your ear, not the murmur of a breeze, not the hum of the smallest insect, not the rustle of leaf or grass; silence, only silence as profound as death, unless it is broken by the distant howl of a prowling hyena. Thus we travel the weary days, longing for night to come; while the sun, our fierce enemy, not only drinks our blood, burns our flesh, and blisters our tongues, but also dries up our *girbehs*, which, full at starting, are shrivelled to half their size by evaporation before the end of the first day.'

'No more jokes and laughter now along the column. The soldiers and servants, covering their heads with blankets and turbans, bring over all the hoods of their heavy cloth burnouses, leaving only a narrow aperture sufficient to see; but, strange to say, the Bedouins, "to the manner born," trudge along on foot, bare-headed and almost naked, without suffering as much as we do. The air that blows is literally like blasts from a furnace or a brick-kiln. Over the surface of the plain it quivers visibly in the sun, like that which rises from a red-hot stove; and now the mirage, seen on all plains, appears with redoubled vividness, as if in mockery of our sufferings. It distorts and magnifies every distant object. When we come to some portion of the plain dotted with low bushes less than a yard high, they are extravagantly magnified. We long for some slight

shade for our noonday meal. We see some trees half a mile ahead, and we hasten towards them; but as we approach, they dwindle down to small bushes. But surely there are trees a little farther on, and we ride towards them, and on, and on, with the same result, until experience teaches us it is all a delusion, and we have at last to take our lunch under the shadow of our camels. On the plains, the herbage, if we find any, is so dry that it crumbles to dust under the camel's tread; and the few trees are utterly bare of all foliage, exhibiting the paradox of a wintry aspect under this intense heat.

It says much for the courage and self-denial of our race, that such scenes as these can be faced, to glean for us who stay at home a knowledge of those strange and distant lands. And yet how many risk themselves in the attempt—wandering over boundless wastes of burning sand, trackless but for the whitened bones of the fallen camels which the preceding caravan has dropped lifeless by the way. We have only given a tithe of the information to be found in General Colston's paper; but it may be sufficient to indicate not only his ability to depict what he saw, but the fortitude and physical endurance which enabled him to traverse that desert land.

THE FORTUNES OF BERTRAM OAKLEY.

CHAPTER XX.—OUR MR MERVYN.

BERTRAM was fairly taken by surprise. 'I hope, sir,' he said, half timidly, as the blood rushed to his pale dark cheek, 'that I have not been intrusive, or prying, in'—

'No, no,' interrupted the great shipbuilder, patting him lightly on the shoulder as he spoke. 'This is no Bluebeard's chamber, and you are very welcome to inspect whatever it contains. My models, however, are especial pets of mine; and I take it as a compliment when a stranger looks at them so fixedly, and for so long a time, as I observed you to do.'

Again Bertram reddened. 'I must beg your pardon, sir, for trespassing on your patience as I have done, quite inadvertently, I assure you.' And he began to grope in the inner pocket of his coat for the thick letter which represented his credentials, and the production of which he felt he should no longer delay.

'No hurry, no hurry!' answered Mr Mervyn, with so genial and natural a frankness that it set Bertram almost at his ease. 'You shall give me the packet presently; but first we may chat over these toys'—pointing to the models—'hobbies of mine, as I said just now. I conjecture that you are fond of reading, and must have read books, whatever they were, which have taught you something about ships? Otherwise, you would hardly have cared for my miniatures.'

'The sight of them, sir, was a treat to me,' said Bertram, emboldened by the great kindness of his host. 'It so happens that I was born, or at least reared, on the coast, within sight and sound of the sea, and I got to be so useful in the fishing-smacks, that my good friends thought me cut out for a sailor. But I do love books; and I have read so much of the Roman galleys—and others

too—that I felt just now as though I saw for the first time the real craft, the shadows of which had been visible to me only in fancy. And here, too, are the ships of a later day, such as Effingham, Raleigh, Drake, may have sailed in. I was amusing myself, when you found me,' added Bertram, with his bright smile, 'by giving names to some of them, as my memory prompted.'

'Name me that one,' said Mr Mervyn quickly, pointing to a begilded model that stood a little apart from the rest, on a blue cushion ornamented by tiny golden roses.

'I think I can guess right, sir, in this case,' was Bertram's ready reply. 'Less gold, sir, than with the Spanish four-deckers, fewer guns, and not so lofty a poop; but a tall, wall-sided, crank man-of-war, first-rate for her age. I should christen her the *Great Harry*. Even the roses on the cushion, King Henry VIII.'s favourite emblem, would give me a hint of that; just as yonder big ship of the seventeenth century, with the white flag at the peak, and the L. R. on the stern-post, may be the *Royal Soleil*, the French flagship of which Louis XIV. was so proud—a fine vessel too,' added Bertram, with a glance towards the shelves.

'Upon my word!' exclaimed Mr Mervyn, 'for a messenger of Groby, Sleather, and Studge, you are a very extraordinary young man.'

'I am a bookworm, sir, by nature,' was Bertram's gentle answer. 'I have lived much alone, and have had no family ties, and little to distract my attention, in leisure hours, from my books—when I can get books. But I am not simply a messenger of our house. I work for Messrs Groby, but in other ways.'

Mr Mervyn's quick eyes had noted the shabbiness of Bertram's well-worn hat and well-brushed coat; he contrasted the signs of decent poverty which his visitor perforce exhibited, with the young man's cultured mind and modest manliness of deportment, and knowing somewhat of Messrs Groby, Sleather, and Studge, divined the rest.

'Well, I am glad,' said Mr Mervyn, in his shrewd, pleasant way, 'that my correspondents have sent me their communication, this time, by some one whose tastes coincide so well with mine, as yours appear to do, Mr'—

'Oakley—Bertram Oakley,' replied the young man.

'Sit down a moment, Mr Oakley, then. Here, nearer to the stove,' said the old gentleman, seating himself near the cheerful blaze, and motioning to Bertram to follow his example. 'I should like, with your leave, to talk a little about yourself. Even if you had not told me that your boyhood had been spent beside the sea, I should never have taken you for a Londoner born and bred. Town-made youngsters, to my mind, are as irreverent as so many town sparrows.'

'I came up to London last winter,' Bertram explained, 'and I feel strange to the great city yet. Perhaps that is partly because I have had little to interest me, little to care for, in it. And yet there was a time when I dreamed of London, as if'—

'As if it had been El Dorado, or the New Jerusalem, I suppose,' chimed in Mr Mervyn good-humouredly. 'So did I, as a boy in old Yorkshire; but I have lived long enough to have got over my first disenchantment, and to be able to

rate big London as no better and no worse than it deserves. But with respect to yourself, you did not become a sailor? Even your hands, though they are limber and lithe enough, would tell me that. But there is a tarriness, an indescribable something, which sticks to Jack, that sticks to him through life. Did you notice our old gate porter, as you came in?

'He noticed me,' replied Bertram, quite confidential now with this great magnate, of whom he had vaguely heard, for there were dealings between the Westminster house and that of Blackwall; and rumours as to the extensive business of Mervyn & Co.—the clippers they built for the Australian and China trade—the contracts for transports and ironclads which they undertook for all governments, home and foreign, had reached even Bertram's ears. It was a great firm. It had launched vast ships, that were cited, for steam-power and stability, for fighting force and capacity of freightage, as types of what ocean-going steamers ought to be; and here was the chief of this great firm, he who had dealings with Emperors and Presidents, with all authorities and private plutocrats of the Old World and the New, finding time to chat with Bertram Oakley, and apparently less in a hurry to curtail the interview than Bertram himself!

'An old sea-dog,' said Mr Mervyn thoughtfully; 'so old, so tough, so seasoned, that he has outlived the generation that followed his comrades, and the generation which succeeded that. I never cross-question him. He has seen battles, and lost his leg in one of them. That is enough for me. I rather think it was when Lord Exmouth bombarded Algiers; but if Old Joe prefers to fancy that he fought under Nelson at the Nile, or under Rodney at the West Indian victory over the Comte de Grasse, it would be the same to me. I like a hero, and I have got one.'

Bertram thought afterwards, that this digression as to the qualities of Joe the gate-keeper had been intended to put him at his ease; for there is nothing more embarrassing to a young man, not naturally conceited, than a conversation which turns upon himself.

'I did not turn sailor, sir, as you see,' said Bertram presently. 'If I had, I should have shipped as a boy on board some Bristol merchantman, or an ordinary seaman for coasting-craft. I had read of mechanical contrivances, and went to Blackston on foot, to seek a livelihood. There I got work in a mill, and earned tolerable wages; but somehow'—

'Somehow, spent them faster than they were earned,' interrupted Mr Mervyn, with an indulgent shake of the head. 'You were very, very young, and boys will be boys.'

'I spent them, sir; but it was in books and—I am afraid you will laugh at me—in scientific apparatus, and'—

Again Mr Mervyn broke in. 'I understand,' he said. 'I was like you, as a lad, only perhaps luckier; and the more credit for you, my brave boy! And so you came up to London at last, and got into the employment of Messrs Groby? Well, well. Mr Studge may come to pay a visit—he does sometimes—and if he does, he and I will have a talk about your future, Mr Oakley. I shall send an answer to their letter to-morrow.'

Then Bertram shook gratefully Mr Mervyn's offered hand, but declined the wine that was pressed upon him; and then came the wending his way through the tortuous lanes of Blackwall and the journey back to London.

OUR RARE OLD HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS.

THE popular notion of an old manuscript is that of a musty, discoloured, dog-eared piece, or pieces, of paper, parchment, or vellum, written in a crabbed hand, and in characters only to be deciphered by an antiquary of the Dr Dryasdust school. Manuscripts are really, however, the foundation of much of our authentic history; without them the labours of historians would be of little worth. All records on paper or parchment must necessarily be of this kind if more than four centuries and a half old, seeing that printing was not until then invented. And even when Gutenberg, De Worde, and Caxton had given the world their invaluable inventions, the progress of the new art was slow, and throughout the following century manuscript records continued to be the rule.

The State Papers belonging to our own country comprise a vast body of manuscripts which for years, nay for centuries, never saw the light of day. They were stowed away in holes and corners in various buildings, without arrangement or catalogue. At length, learned men urged the government to collect, arrange, and catalogue the heterogeneous mass, and to print such of them as might be useful to statesmen, legislators, historians, journalists, and literary men. This really great undertaking is now being proceeded with, the Master of the Rolls being the official mostly concerned with the duty. The new Record Office is the building in which the treasures are now for the most part stored, arranged with scrupulous care in fireproof rooms. The papers thus printed and published from time to time, evince the desire of the authorities to place the more important documents within reach of the class of persons most fitted to appreciate them. The expense is heavy, but parliament readily grants the supplies.

These published State Papers have been the means of suggesting a further development in the same direction. The fact has become known to literary men that large collections of valuable old manuscripts are possessed by cathedral chapters, colleges and universities, grammar-schools and chartered bodies, municipal corporations, church and parochial authorities, and private individuals. Not only are the contents of these collections unknown to the general public; they are in many cases almost unknown to the owners. It is very dry work, except to a practised reader of old documents, to pore over manuscripts in many of which the writing is more or less obliterated. Hence gradually arose the question: Can these old treasures be in any degree placed within reach of the same class of persons that now experience the advantage and value of printed copies of the State Papers? Would the owners consent to such a course; and who would undertake the work and bear the cost?

It is more than fifty years since these questions were first pressed upon public attention; but it was a long time before the government took any

practical interest in the matter. In Scotland, a number of scholarly and public-spirited gentlemen formed themselves into clubs and societies for the purpose of printing early manuscript records of various kinds. The chief of these combinations were the Bannatyne, Maitland, and other clubs, and the Wodrow Society; and under their auspices, and at the sole expense of the members, a number of most valuable volumes were issued. Among these were such mines of historical wealth as the cartularies of the Abbeys of Melrose, Kelso, Dryburgh, Newbattle, Dunfermline, St Andrews, &c.; and there were also reproduced many curious and interesting papers on special periods in the history of Scotland. In England, such bodies as the Early English Text Society, the Shakespeare Society, &c., are now engaged in similar work.

But in course of time, the government saw it to be their duty to interest themselves in the publication of the more important State Papers hitherto kept in the pigeon-holes and recesses of the State Office; and eleven or twelve years ago, they appointed a body called the 'Historical Manuscript Commissioners.' Their functions were: 'To make inquiry into the places in which documents illustrative of history, or of general public interest, belonging to private persons, are deposited; and to consider whether, with the consent of the owners, means might not be taken to render such documents available for public reference, by means of printed abstracts and catalogues. The Commissioners comprised the Master of the Rolls, two or three other *ex officio* members, and several learned men; together with noblemen and gentlemen who were themselves the owners of valuable old manuscripts which they had signified their willingness to make public. These Commissioners, who rendered their services gratuitously, had a paid Secretary and paid examiners or searchers. When an organised plan had been formed, a circular letter was drawn up, and copies transmitted by the Secretary to numerous persons and bodies known or believed to possess rare old manuscripts.

That the documents were to be scrupulously treated in accordance with the owners' wishes will be seen from the following passages in the circular: 'If any person expresses his willingness to submit any paper or collection of papers within his possession to examination by the Commissioners, they will cause an inspection to be made by some competent person; and from the information derived by this means, the Commissioners will make a private report to the owner on the general nature of the papers. Such report will not be made public without the owner's consent. Where the papers are not mere isolated documents, but form a collection which appears to be of literary or historical value, a chronological list or brief calendar will be deposited in the public Record Office.' The circular proceeded to point out how careful the examination would be, so as not to obtrude upon private affairs: 'I have to call your attention to the fact that nothing of a private character, or relating to the titles of existing owners, is to be divulged. If in the course of his examination any title-deeds or other documents of a private character chance to come before him, they are to be instantly put aside by the examiner, and not to be reported on or calendared under any pretence whatever.' In short, what they wished to make public are those details only that throw light

on the civil, political, ecclesiastical, scientific, or industrial history of our native country.

So well arranged were the plans of the Commissioners, and so great the reliance placed on that body, that the possessors of curious old manuscripts came forward promptly and numerously. In the first year, the manuscripts belonging to the House of Lords, to nine colleges of Cambridge University, to the chapters of four cathedrals, and two minsters (York and Westminster), to the corporations of fourteen municipal cities and towns, were, with the consent of the respective owners, examined and reported on. The calendars or chronological catalogues, with brief descriptions of the manuscripts individually, filled for the first year a massive folio volume of small print. Subsequent years—for the Commission has thus far partaken of the character of a permanent one—have presented similar testimony to the labours of the Commissioners and their staff of able searchers and examiners. Some of the volumes reach a thousand pages each; and so much interest has been taken in them by learned societies and individuals, that two or three editions of some of the volumes have been called for; while stray copies of such as are out of print and not yet furnished with new editions, readily find purchasers at much more than the original published price, in accordance with the well-known commercial tendency of supply and demand.

Dip where we may into this storehouse of authentic jottings relating to the past history and characteristics of our land, we are sure to meet with something curious or important, or both.

Take, for instance, the collection of manuscripts belonging to the House of Lords. There is a Petition dated 1645 from workmen employed in repairing (old) St Paul's Cathedral, praying that some scaffolding, timber, &c., belonging to it, 'which as the work goes not forward will decay and be lost,' may be sold for their benefit, as they are ready to perish for want of the money due to them. A bad time was that, when Charles I. had begun to topple over to his ruin, for the prosecution of any public works. Another manuscript contains a Petition from the New River Company, complaining that of late certain disaffected persons had in many places dammed up the passage of their river—made by Sir Hugh Myddleton—and cut the banks and pipes, and praying that some course may be taken to prevent the like offence in future. If the experience of householders in the Metropolis be taken as a test, the New River Company are more than able to defend themselves, bullying, as they do, the owners of cisterns and water-butts in a somewhat tyrannical fashion. Another Petition—culled at random—was from the minister and inhabitants of Twickenham, complaining that the ancient custom of bringing two great cakes into the church on Easter Day, to be distributed among 'the younger sort of people,' caused much disorder, by reason of the scrambling and contention; and praying that it may be discontinued. We may presumably infer that the cakes were some old annual endowment, dole, or charity, which could not be withdrawn or extinguished without the sanction of some superior authority.

The Muniment Room at Westminster Abbey contains many old manuscripts of an interesting

character. One is a letter from Maude de Clare, Countess of Gloucester and Hertford, to the Prior and Monastery of Westminster. In this letter, she expresses a hope that 'they will not take in ill part the long stay which their friar Dan Henry is making with her; and that they will allow him to sojourn with her some time longer, with the relic which they had allowed her to retain so long, and which had done her so much good during an illness; its removal would be a great unhappiness to her.' The relic may have been a reputed bit of the true cross, or a bone of some saint; but whatever its nature, the contemplation of the relic was believed by Countess Maude to have been beneficial to her. Brother Dan Henry was evidently the custodian, out of whose hands the much-prized relic was not to pass.

The Westminster Abbey manuscripts, as we have said, comprise many other curious and interesting examples; but our limits prevent us from noticing more than four or five of them. Under date 1385, in the time of Richard II., a petition appears from several of the friars to the king, complaining of the great misgovernment by the Abbot, and praying that the visitor of the Order may take steps thereon. A later document tells of the proceedings against Abbot George for his extravagance and mismanagement; the arrangements for the liquidation of his debts; and his retirement from his position until they were paid. A manuscript dated 1518 (*temp.* Henry VIII.) presents a supplication by a friar to the Bishop of Rome, complaining of having been falsely accused of robbing the Prior, and of being forced to perform services when sick; and praying that compensation may be given to him. A remarkable contest for the honour of burying King Henry VI. is recorded in another of these manuscripts. The body had been removed from Chertsey to Windsor by command of Richard III. In the time of Henry VII., the Abbot of Chertsey requested that it might be sent back to his Abbey; the Dean of Windsor resisted this, while the Abbot of Westminster also put in a claim. The tripartite contest was referred to the king in council to settle. The decision was in favour of Westminster Abbey, on the ground that it had been the place of sepulture of so many English sovereigns. And there, we presume, are the bones of the Lancastrian King Henry VI.

The Cecil Manuscripts, belonging to the Marquis of Salisbury, and kept at Hatfield House, are regarded as among the most valuable possessed by any of our noble or county families. They are specially noticeable for their connection with an important period of English history. The first Marquis was eldest son of the great Lord Burleigh, for many years prime-minister to Queen Elizabeth; and thus it arose that the Cecil Collection is rich in letters to and from the leading personages of the age. The Queen herself, the king of Scots, Lord Burleigh, his eldest son when plain Mr Robert Cecil, Sir Walter Raleigh, the Earl of Essex, Howard of Arundel, Bothwell—all figure in this correspondence. These documents are sooner or later to be put into print, on account of their bearing upon a stirring period in our annals.

The Commissioners have ascertained that some of the smaller English towns possess old manuscripts which deserve to be brought to light. Fordwich, for instance, now little other than a

mere village, was at one time a considerable commercial town. Small as the place is, however, it still possesses the honours of a corporate town, and an old hall in which some curious manuscripts are preserved. Among the churchwardens' accounts for a part of the sixteenth century is one written by a functionary whose knowledge of orthography appears to have been rather peculiar: 'Mony gadyrred [gathered] in the church, 4s. 1d.' He acknowledges the receipt of 6s. 8d. per honey made by the church bees—bees, we presume, hived within the church precincts—probably in the roof. 'Payd unto the wax chaundeler for all maner of lyghts, as hit a parith (it appeareth) in his boke, elevenpence.'

Another small place where ordinary folk would scarcely look for old manuscripts of any interest is Mendlesham, in Suffolk. The belfry of the church was found by the Commissioners to contain the documents, kept in very creditable order. Under date 1554, the churchwardens' books contain an entry concerning meat and drink for a journey to Bury St Edmunds for the visitation of the Bishop, fourpence. Other entries relate to a pound of candles for Christmas morning, five pounds of wax and the expense of making it into candles to use in the mass. In 1574, when Catholic Queen Mary had been succeeded on the throne by her Protestant sister, Queen Elizabeth, we find that Mendlesham had conformed to the changes of the times. Items now occur of 33s. 8d. for one quarter's salary to the schoolmaster (a good omen); 13s. 2d. for a wey of cheese, and half a reawall (?) of butter; 'three pyntes of clarett wyne for the Communion, ninepence [threepence a pint for claret!]; three pyntes of muskadyne for the Communion, tenpence; two dozen Catachismes, 3s. 4d.' There was also a small sum 'payd to Ries wyfe for drink for the ringers when they ronge for joy of that day that the Queen's Maiestye was crowned.'

We have touched lightly and rapidly on a few only of the more curious entries in these valuable reports. We cannot, of course, enter here into others of more weighty character, which historians, philosophers, men of science, statesmen, legislators, judges and lawyers, political economists, literary men, and the higher class of journalists, will appreciate more and more as they become better acquainted with them. The Historical Manuscript Commissioners are doing their work right well.

A MISS IS AS GOOD AS A MILE.

CONCLUSION.

SEATED at his breakfast table on the following morning, Mark Barnes was painfully anxious to hear the familiar rat-tat of the postman; and it required continual reference to his watch to convince himself that the official was not extremely late, or had actually forgotten the street altogether. At last—in reality at his usual time—the train of sharp double knocks was heard exploding as the letter-bearer came down the long street; and sure enough there was a letter for Barnes, and the writing was in a hand he had seen many times before. He tore open the envelope. It was a very brief epistle—merely an address, followed by these words: 'Please ask for Mr Tomkins. I thought it might perhaps confuse any undesired inquirers if they had suspected Tunnell, to find no trace of him.'

Mark at once proceeded to write the promised note to Mr Willerton, not failing to advise him of the change in the name, which he felt to be a somewhat awkward point. As he closed this and put it in the breast-pocket of his coat, he muttered: 'I don't half like trusting a total stranger such as this man; but then I don't see what better we can do; and after all, we do not intend to tell him anything, or let him behind the scenes in the least; so there cannot be much harm in it.' His breakfast ended, he hurried to the point whence he always took the omnibus, and at his usual time presented himself at the office.

They were very busy in the counting-house at that period, and the staff of Hoybell, Weekes, and Croulle were scarcely sufficient to carry on the business, so there was not a moment's pause for any of the clerks; and at twelve o'clock, Mr Rawley spoke to Mark. 'Here, Barnes,' he said; 'I am sorry to interrupt you, much more to send you out; but I must ask you to go at once to Limehouse, and see Casker's people about shipping the goods on Tuesday, for certain. Here is the letter.'

Of course, there was nothing left for Barnes but to start off immediately; which was not only awkward, as interfering with his office work, but unpleasant; for it was a pouring wet morning, with every prospect of the rain lasting all day.

Mark was tolerably damp before he reached the railway station; got worse before he reached Casker's, and worse still before he regained the railway, so that he was in no very pleasant mood; and short though the trip was, yet various little delays had so used up the time, that it was fully two o'clock when he returned from Limehouse to the London terminus. If he had felt vexed and out of temper before, his mood was not improved by finding, when he thrust his hand into his pocket for the railway ticket, that the letter to Mr Willerton was still there, unposted! What was to be done? It was fully the time by which Mr Willerton must have expected to receive the letter, and Barnes knew that the old gentleman was going out after an early tea, before the post could now reach him. He would be offended at being treated with such a want of attention; Mrs Hadleigh and Ethel would pronounce him very lukewarm in their interest, and when they learned the truth, would be still more mortified. He knew too, that directly he went back to the office, he would be up to his eyes in business, and unable to move from his desk. He would make a desperate determination, and go straight on to Bloomsbury with the letter himself. If he did not first go to the office, the authorities could only think he had been a long time in running down to Limehouse and back, especially as he was entitled to his time for dinner. Yes, that was what he would do, as the only means of preventing a mischief his neglect would otherwise create; he would have a hasty lunch, and then proceed direct to Bloomsbury.

To avoid a chance rencontre with any one of the clerks from his own firm—a contingency not at all impossible—he would not enter any of their more familiar eating-houses; but plunging down a narrow way, he found a quiet tavern at the end, very well known to the business

people of the immediate neighbourhood, but not greatly resorted to by strangers. Here, as the readiest viand, he was served with some cold roast beef, and was about to attack it with the extreme haste the exigency of his position demanded, when he laid down his knife and fork, and glanced cautiously but eagerly across the dining-room. Fortunately for him, the old-fashioned tavern had the equally old-fashioned boxes, topped with little blue curtains, which partially screened the occupants, and under cover of these, Barnes was able to look and listen without much danger of himself being seen.

'Bring me a steak, John,' said a voice, 'and look sharp about it.—What will you have?'

'Bring me a steak as well,' said a second voice.

'Two steaks, as quick as you like, John,' said the first speaker; 'for I ought to be out of here by this time.'

Two men, evidently connected with the police force, had entered, and given the above orders while standing in the centre of the room, so that they were plainly visible to Barnes. One was dressed in the uniform of a superior officer of police, the other was clad in plain clothes; but in their build and carriage they might have been twin brothers; and the latter had the voice, the dress, and the face of Mr Willerton. It was Willerton, whom Barnes was picturing as waiting anxiously at that moment for his forgotten letter. He had no blue spectacles on, it is true; but his keen eyes did not need them. This was a suspicious fact in itself; but what was it to the awful fact, that he was dining with a policeman, an inspector of police, and that he too evidently belonged to the Force!

The cold perspiration gathered on Mark's forehead, as the whole mystery stood revealed, and he saw what a narrow hairbreadth escape he had experienced; how nearly he had fallen into an abyss, and had dragged those he most wished to help, into the trap. The two officers chose a seat in the very next box to Barnes, so that he could not see them. But then they could not see him, which was something, and he strained every nerve to pick up any fragments of their conversation. They were too guarded, however, to speak loud enough for him to overhear a great deal, but a little he did hear, and that little was by no means reassuring. The waiter looked oddly at Barnes once or twice, as being surprised to see a customer who had laid such stress on his requiring his dinner in a great hurry, taking his time so much, and making such slow progress. Of course Barnes saw that, come what might, the officers must be allowed to leave the room before himself, or perhaps the winning cards might pass from his hands. He thought he held them now.

'It seems to me to be a certainty, Tom,' said the first voice.

'Certainty! It is as good as over,' said Mr Willerton. 'The old girl let out so much this morning, that I know if she could have told me all, she would have done it. I wish she had.'

'Shall you?'—began number one, but he dropped his voice so much that Barnes could not distinguish what was said. When next they spoke aloud, their words coloured Mark's cheek, and made him tingle with anger—and shame too, for he felt that they were not wholly undeserved.

'Oh, he's a fool!' said Willerton; 'not much better than the old woman herself.'

'Worse, I think, from what you say,' growled number one.

'Well, perhaps he is,' continued Willerton. 'He's a clerk in the City in the same house. Pretty place it must be; half rogues and half fools. However, it is out of such people we make our living; so I shall just have a little whisky cold for luck, and then be off to Bloomsbury.'

Some more mumbled conversation followed, until the waiter brought the cold whiskies in obedience to order, when Willerton said: 'You would laugh, Sam, to see me coming the invalid dodge; milk every night, because I am so delicate. I have drunk more rum to flavour the mawkish stuff, in the week I've been there, than I ever did in the same time before, in the whole course of my life. Well, here's luck!'

The two glasses were tossed off, and the two officers stalked from the room. As they went out, Willerton, seeing that it still rained, threw a plaid—which he had carried on his arm—round his shoulders, and this action revealed a great deal more to Barnes. By a single flash, as it were, he recognised at once the man who had followed him into the omnibus, who had followed him out of it, and whom he had seen lingering at the street corner when he looked out some half an hour after entering his house.

His resolution was taken at once. He saw now where the danger had been, and terrible as was the shock of discovering whither his blindness had led him, he felt that now he knew his danger, he could evade it. He returned to his office and wrote a brief note to Willerton, giving an address in Westminster, for it might perhaps create suspicion to give it elsewhere—but in a very different part from that in which the fugitive really was hiding. As a matter of course, he said nothing about the change of name, and he asked Mr Willerton to call as near to half-past seven o'clock as possible. This was exactly the time at which he now intended to go to the right address himself; and thus he expected to make sure of the detective's absence at the most critical moment. He threw in some few special directions and cautions to be observed, which he thought would read very mysteriously, and strengthen the detective's belief that he was about to effect a grand coup. This note he sent by a messenger, who would only reach Mr Willerton in time for him to start.

The unremitting work in which he was engaged during the whole of the afternoon, was a positive benefit to him, as it prevented him from growing as nervous and excited as he would otherwise have done. He was especially glad, nevertheless, when he was able to leave his desk, and feel that he was really about to do something to make up for the awful mistake he had fallen into. As he was too early for the time he had named—half-past seven—and as he of course wished, above all things, to avoid being seen loitering in the neighbourhood of Mr Tomkins's hiding-place, he had to spend an hour in a City coffee-house, and this was the worst part of all the trying day to him. Every voice made him start; at every creak of the door he looked nervously round, dreading to see the now hateful and ominous face of Willerton; but at last the time came for him to go, and he

left the house with an ejaculation of thankfulness.

He found the place readily enough; and on asking for Mr Tomkins, was joyfully received by the unlucky criminal. The packet was ready; and Mavors not unreasonably asked him how it was that he came, in lieu of sending, as arranged. Barnes told him.

His listener's cheek grew very white as he proceeded. 'What an escape!' he exclaimed. 'My dear boy! how much I owe you. But do you think they will follow me up, now I have sent the papers back?'

'I fear they will—Mr Croulle will,' said Barnes. 'He seems very bitter against you. And there is the money, you know; you will be followed on that.'

'But my good gracious me!' exclaimed Tomkins, 'I don't owe them twenty pounds, and I left a month's salary due. I know it was very wrong to take the papers, but I did so, solely to spite Croulle. But I won't say any more about it, as I know I have no excuse. Write to me here, my boy; I think I am safe in this place for a bit. And now, go to poor Mrs Hadleigh and Ethel; they will be so anxious to know how you have got on.'

Barnes remained a few minutes longer, chiefly speaking of Mavors' chances of escape, and of living if he did escape; then, charged with many messages of affection to the outcast's sister and niece, he left. He did not think it safe to go direct to Spackham Street with the papers in his possession; accordingly, he made a circuit, and called at a private restaurant where he sometimes lunched, and where he was known, and asked the waiter to place the parcel in some safe place for him till morning, as it was for the office, and he had a call to make, and did not wish to carry the parcel with him. The obliging waiter at once took charge of the parcel; and Barnes slipped again into the street, this time with a light heart. It was like a great weight taken off his mind, this happy, and he knew safe, disposal of these dangerous papers. He reached Spackham Street without adventure, and felt pretty certain that on this occasion at any rate he was not watched.

Here he found the mother and daughter all anxiety about Mr Willerton and his errand. He had gone out in the rain, poor dear man! Mrs Hadleigh said, so cheerfully on their account. Their pleasure at seeing Mark was great; but their horror—dismay—there is no word sufficiently powerful to express what they felt when he told them what had happened. The wolf, the absolute tiger in sheep's clothing that they had been trusting and admiring! The dreadful, cruel, treacherous man, who, no doubt, had handcuffs in his pocket while he was talking to them; and slept—no doubt either—with a policeman's rattle and truncheon under his pillow! Well, there was no trusting anybody, and for her part, Mrs Hadleigh never would trust any one again. But this she could and would say, and woman-like did say it: she had never liked the man from the first moment she saw him!

Barnes had to narrate the minutest particulars of his mission, to tell Mrs Hadleigh how her brother looked, and what he, Barnes, thought Mavors intended to do.

'I fancy,' said Mark, 'from what he told me,

that he hopes to get abroad as waiter or cook upon some of the cheap sailing-vessels.'

'Cook! Why, he never could even boil an egg, poor dear!' exclaimed Mrs Hadleigh.

The details which Barnes had to furnish occupied them until the step of Mr Willerton was heard in the room above, he having let himself in, and some one with him, with his latch-key. Each of the conspirators turned pale at the sound, and paler again when the parlour bell was touched. Mrs Hadleigh, with the most composed countenance she could assume, went upstairs, and returning quickly, said: 'He says he is very sorry he could not find the house out; thinks you made a mistake in the number, as there is no No. 90 in the street. But, Mark, he asked the very first thing, if you were here; and when I said "Yes," he said he should like to see you; and I said you would go up.'

'Oh, I will go!' exclaimed Barnes, with a show of greater alacrity than he really felt, and at once left the sitting-room.

'Good-evening, Mr Willerton,' he began, by way of having that first blow which is said to be half the battle. 'Mrs Hadleigh tells me that you could not find Mr Tunnell from the direction I sent.'

'Mrs Hadleigh is perfectly right; I could not,' said the other drily, staring through the blue spectacles at Barnes, with the sharp eyes the young man so well knew were covered by that veil.

'You found the street, I suppose?' began Barnes.

'I did,' said Mr Willerton; 'but I did not find No. 90, and I did not find Mr Tunnell. But I have brought a friend with me, who would like to look about Mrs Hadleigh's rooms, and see whether she may not have got those valuable maps she spoke of lying beside her. In the meantime, you will just sit where you are, Mr Barnes, and not interfere with my friend's operations.'

The other man, clearly another detective officer, left the room, and proceeded down to the apartments occupied by Mrs Hadleigh and her daughter. He remained there for a considerable time, during which Barnes congratulated himself a thousand times that he had had the forethought to place the papers elsewhere. By-and-by, the other officer returned to the room, empty-handed.

'Then,' said Mr Willerton, with a decidedly malicious look, 'I won't detain you any longer, Mr Barnes. I only want to tell you this: when I go to find Mr Tunnell again, I shall not ask you for his direction.'

Do what he would, a conscious look would struggle into his face, and Barnes was glad to make a hasty exit, quite satisfied that no further disguise was intended by Mr Willerton.

The next morning, Mr Weekes, who was first at the office, had the great gratification of receiving from his clerk the precious documents which the firm had so desired, with a message—which Barnes said he had received, but did not say how—expressive of Mavors' regret at his conduct, and his intention to make up the trifling loss the House had sustained by him. Mr Croulle's pleasure at receiving the papers was almost blighted by his vexation at the culprit still being able to evade the police, and his passion almost choked him when his partners insisted upon withdrawing the reward.

Barnes was called into the private room again and again, to be catechised by Mr Croulle and by various police emissaries; but he would reveal nothing; and when he was threatened by one partner, the others spoke up for him. Yet Barnes felt he should have but an unpleasant time of it in future, and he would probably have soon found he was right; only that in a very short time, within a week from the dénouement, Mr Weekes sent for him to say that his (Mr Weekes') nephew was about to take a share in a large concern, and would wish to have his own confidential clerk; that if Barnes chose to accept this post, it was at his service. 'And from what I can see,' added the kindly old gentleman, 'you had better leave at once, Barnes.' He went on to say that if that poor creature Mavors, whom he only regarded as half-witted, chose to begin the world again, and would go out to China, he might have a chance of redeeming his character; 'of which I can see little chance if he stays in England,' concluded Mr Weekes, 'for he has an inveterate enemy, whose spirit is not to my taste.'

It need hardly be said how eagerly both these offers were accepted, Barnes feeling sure he might answer for Mavors; and directly he was at liberty, he hurried up to Spackham Street with the intelligence.

Great was the delight his news diffused. Mrs Hadleigh wept for joy to think that her brother would be respectable and honest again; Ethel was almost as much pleased at this as her mother; but she had another cause for delight mingling in the intelligence. Mark's advance of salary would enable him to make certain arrangements at once, which he had hoped to do in some two or three years' time. Mark was not very much surprised to learn that Mr Willerton had quitted his apartments without any formal leave-taking, though his rent and the money in lieu of a week's notice were duly paid.

Matters having now assumed a somewhat brighter aspect for those whom our story chiefly concerns, it only remains to be recorded that Mavors was got safely away to China, and died there some years after. Mark pleased his new employers, and in course of time rose to be head-clerk in the firm, quite an apex of dignity in the eyes of himself and his clerkly brethren; while a certain young lady became Ethel Barnes that very summer.

Willerton had apparently disappeared; and never again, save in one trifling incident, did anything occur to remind Mark of him, or of the troubled days at Hoybell, Weekes, and Croulle's office. He was one evening, two or three years afterwards, passing a certain very showy restaurant at the West End, when he was tapped on the shoulder and his name was pronounced. Looking round, he saw a gentleman of clerical aspect, whom he could not remember to have seen before. His face expressed his astonishment; but the clerical gentleman smiled. 'Come in here,' he said, 'and have a glass of sherry.' He seized Barnes by the arm, and led him into the restaurant, the young man being too much astonished to offer any opposition. It was Willerton! Mark ejaculated the name; and the other continued: 'Yes; it's me. That is, I was Mr Willerton. Now I'm somebody else.

My name is Jackson—Tom Jackson. I daresay you have often heard of me. I don't bear any ill-will, you know; on the contrary, I admire you for it; but you did me out of that hundred pounds cleverly.'

'I am afraid I cannot claim much credit,' said Barnes, 'as it was only by accident.'—

'Oh, ah! yes; entirely an accident, of course,' interrupted his companion, winking and tapping his nose with a knowing expression. 'It was accidental, of course, your taking me up to that precious Regent's Park! Accidental, your sending me to a wrong street with an impossible number, while you quietly walked off and got the papers! Directly I got to that blessed street, and found there was no No. 90, says I: "I'm done! That young fellow has been too much for me." I knew it. But I didn't expect it of you; I must own that. I am glad to hear you are doing well, for your own sake, and for the sake of that pretty little girl, your wife. As the reward was dropped, I am glad you got Mavors off. I know where he is; but of course it wouldn't pay to fetch him.—Well, here's your health, Mr Barnes. It was a near thing; but then a Miss is as good as a Mile.'

SCRAMBLES UP THE HILL OF LIFE.

We are all familiar with instances of men who, spurred on by ambition or the love of approbation, have snapped the chains which in early life held them in poverty or obscurity, and by sheer perseverance have borne down opposing agencies, reaching in course of time the coveted goal of competency or distinction. But the instances which are known are few when compared with those which are not known; that is, with persons hid from all except a very few who, observing their early struggles, have watched and marked their progress and its consummation. Almost every village can point to its man who, born in indigence, and brought up in ignorance and toil, has waited for, and at last secured a chance of bettering his lot; who has lived for years a life of usefulness, and at last died a public character, his career a model for imitation, and his success an incentive to persevering enterprise.

The writer is acquainted with a man, now wearing the 'sere and yellow leaf' of age, who, when he had reached the stage of manhood, knew not the alphabet of the language he spoke. Passing a hoarding one day, he heard a very little boy read, with marked fluency, one of the bills posted thereon. 'This is what I, a man cannot do,' said the listener; and such a feeling of shame crept over him that, to use his own words, 'If I could have squeezed myself into a mousehole, out of sight, I would have done so.' Happily his next thought was, 'I am not too old to learn, and learn I will.' His first effort was directed to the Sunday-school, where, by dint of close attention, he speedily got to know the names and powers of most of the letters of the alphabet. Then, instead of spending his pocket-money foolishly, as had been his wont, he bought a slate and pencils, a Reading-made-easy, and a pound of candles, and shutting himself in his bedroom, he spent his evenings in adding to the knowledge gained on Sundays. Thus in a few months he was able to read any bill

posted on the hoarding, as well as to teach intelligently in the Sunday-school. This man has held posts of public usefulness and responsibility which he could not have held had he remained as illiterate as he was when he heard the boy read the poster; besides, he has created a business which will enable him to spend his last days in independence, instead of within the walls of a work-house.

Some years ago, the writer was talking with a friend—since deceased—in that friend's elegant sitting-room. We will style him Mr Jay. Starting to his feet, as though excited by his recollections, and looking out of his bay-window, which commanded a view of at least three of the four points of the compass, he said, with pardonable pride: 'I am the architect of my own fortune; the monarch of all I survey!' Amongst the 'all' was a pile of buildings filled with costly machinery, the buzz of which fell each moment on our ears. 'And yet,' said Mr Jay, 'I have not got this by speculation; nor do I now speculate; all my possessions have been secured by honest trading. I'll tell you what I've done. Believing that it is well to follow up a good beginning, I have for many years bought the cargo of a certain ship, because my first purchase thereof turned out well. I said: "I'll try the *Zephyr's* cargo next year." I did so. It did just as well for me; and thus I've gone on year by year. The other week, the moment I saw the *Zephyr* reported as being in the Channel, I telegraphed the owners that I would buy her cargo. I did so; fifty thousand pounds-worth. I had some thousands offered me for my bargain before it was landed; but I declined the offer, for I could make more of it by bringing it here and working it up.'

Forty years before I had this talk with the prosperous manufacturer, he was a poor man, living in a scantily furnished cottage, which he was assisted in keeping over his head by his wife's industry in making and selling toffy and gingerbread. Unlike many of his neighbours, he saved up whatever money was not wanted for food and clothing. It accumulated. With two hundred pounds thus saved, he bought in a time of panic what could not then find a market; he kept it until the tide of trade turned, and then he cleared cent. per cent. by the transaction. Soon after, he began to manufacture cloth on his own account. He did well. Afterwards, he built a mill, which has been enlarged many times since, and in which most of the villagers find employment.

'We have not had a strike since I began to run the mill,' said Mr Jay. 'I give my work-people a wage upon which they can live in comfort; I neither raise it nor lower it with changes in trade; and as my work-people know they cannot mend themselves, we get on without quarrels and stoppages. Many work for me to-day who worked for me thirty years ago.'

I have in my mind's eye a man who was known amongst his fellows in his native town when a youth, by the cognomen of 'Gentleman Robert.' Not that he was a gentleman in the common acceptance of that word; far from it; few had a poorer home or more painful surroundings than he; and yet he was called 'Gentleman Robert' because he always had a genteel

appearance. Never did he leave his lowly home of a morning without his clothes, though poor, being scrupulously clean; and his shoes were as bright as blacking and brush could make them. He wore a neat necktie, surmounted by a collar as clean as a newly-made pin; and as Robert was tall and well built, and had a very fair skin, he looked 'every inch a gentleman.' Besides, what he looked, he was. He had a smile and a kind word for all. In early life, he was put to learn a trade with a person, who, not being married, had no children to inherit his business. At this time, Robert had a penny or two a week for pocket-money allowed him. He kept a strict account of the way in which he spent it, so that he added system to his other acquirements. As he rose to manhood, he grew in the confidence and esteem of his master, and began to be noticed by the gentry of the town, who predicted for him a useful and prominent place amongst the tradesfolk. Nor were they out of their reckoning; for Robert had not been many months out of his apprenticeship before his master put him behind the counter in his sale-shop; and in a while gave him a partnership. It is many years since I saw 'Gentleman Robert;' indeed, I do not know whether he yet lives; but, living or dead, he is another instance of a young man rising superior to his position and surroundings, and achieving an honourable position in early manhood and in after-life by the force of his native character.

I will give another case, even more noteworthy than the last. One of my early companions was a youth whom I will name George Calvert. His mother was a widow in such indigent circumstances, that poor George could never ask a friend to go and see him, or spend an hour in his society, at his home. It is a mystery to me at this day where and how the poor fellow spent his evenings, and how he gathered the respectable amount of knowledge he possessed. From leaving the charity-school to his being fifteen years old, he was a grocer's errand-boy, and it would have been better for the lad had he been allowed to remain with the grocer, and learn the business. However, for some reason or other, perhaps the consideration of a shilling or two a week, his mother put him to acquire a trade for which he had neither taste nor aptitude; hence he was unhappy during his apprenticeship, and made nothing out of his business. When one who liked the occupation, and was physically adapted to its manipulation, had had a month's experience thereof, he could leave poor George far behind; so, before he had reached the end of his term of bondage, he had made up his mind to bid farewell to his profession, and go back to the vending of sugars and the mixing of teas. He did so. During the twelve months which he spent at the business after the expiration of his apprenticeship, he had contrived to save five pounds, with which he bought a second-hand watch. Just at this juncture, a grocer in a small way, giving up the business, had his stock and good-will to sell. George turned his watch into money, borrowed what made his capital into the sum needed to pay the retiring grocer his valuation; and thus getting the business, he became the head of a concern which though very small, he liked and could manage. It is over forty years since this transaction took place. Our hero began

wisely, and went on with thrift and caution; hence, while he has seen hundreds fail, he has gone up the hill of prosperity with slow but sure steps, and like Mr Jay, he can now buy a shipload of the commodities in which he deals, and pay for them in hard cash!

I have so far treated of men who began life on a low rung of the social ladder, but not on the lowest. And lest such as may be on that rung, or even on no rung at all, but in the very mud of wretchedness and misery, may say: 'There is no hope for such as we; we are too far sunk; we are hopelessly involved,' I will relate a case or two which will meet even their condition.

It is now more than forty-four years since a youth, all in rags and tatters, and with an expression of face which indicated abject destitution and misery, presented himself at the house of one whom I well knew, and said: 'If you will help me, I will try and make myself into a useful man.' The poor wretch was then in his eighteenth year. His father had died years before; and his mother a hopeless drunkard, had lived a vagrant's life, taking with her this poor lad. For five or six years, however, he had begged on his own account, travelling the country round, and taking a yearly excursion into Scotland. He was on his way thither when, caught in a storm of wind and rain, he took refuge in a barn between Lancaster and Carlisle. Falling asleep, he dreamed that his father came to him, and casting upon him a look of intense pity, said: 'Willy, my lad, give up this vagrant life; cast yourself on the generosity of Mr So-and-so'—naming the person upon whom the youth waited, as already narrated—'and he will help you to get a living in a manly way.'

Willy awoke. The dream so affected him, that he then and there resolved to turn over a fresh leaf in the book of his life; so, instead of pushing on to Carlisle, he turned his face towards the town wherein his hope now lay, never swerving in his resolve until he stood before the friend named by his father in the dream. The last time I saw Willy, it was in his own well-furnished house in a beautiful suburb, surrounded by a well-trained and industrious family. The greater part of his reformed life had been spent in commercial pursuits, wherein he had earned the good opinion of all who knew him, and the esteem of those who knew him best; and at the time I refer to he ranked with the sober, industrious, and useful inhabitants of a flourishing seaport town.

Another case, and the last out of many which I could narrate. One Saturday night, in the month of April, many years ago, a man and his wife, footsore and weary, entered a small market-town in North-west Yorkshire. They were tramps. The man had just four-and-sixpence in his pocket. 'We've had enough o' this sort o' life, lass; let's turn over a new leaf.'

'I's vary willin', lad; but what can us do?' said the wife.

'It's my opinion we may live anywhere if we're but willin'; and I've a notion as we may git on here.'

'I's willin' to try,' said the woman; 'for I find as a rollin' stone gethers noa moss.'

One-and-sixpence was spent in provisions for the next day; so, with three shillings, the man went on Monday morning to a general-dealer's,

and bought needles, pins, and tape. With these and a borrowed bag wherein to put rags, bones, and whatever else might turn up, he set off among the farms and hamlets round about, collecting whatever he believed he could turn into cash, and giving his smallwares in return. Twenty years afterwards, I became acquainted with this family. They then possessed a well-furnished house, and a shop filled in every corner with furniture for sale. Besides this, the man had a county vote as a freeholder. I need not describe the way in which this couple had gone on and up from the time the tide of their lives took this favourable turn.

There are few who, having health and the use of their faculties, may not improve their lot, whatever it may be. It needs but a fixed resolve and a persistent use of available means to get out of any hole into which they may have fallen. Let such not despise the means of rescue at hand, even if it be but the selling of matches. Let their spendings come short of their earnings; and if they act on the motto, 'He that tholes, overcomes,' their success is sure.

THE STORY OF ROLF.

ROLF was a collie. There was nothing remarkable about his appearance. He was a handsome animal certainly, but I have seen handsomer. He was simply a purely-bred, good-sized, well-formed black and tan shepherd dog. But although I have had a long and extensive acquaintance with dogs of various breeds, it has never been my fortune to know one that could match Rolf in keenness and breadth of sagacity and in versatility of acquirements. He became my property when we were both very young; he, a fat, unshapely, little pup, just able to lick milk on his own account; I, a boy of fourteen. I was proud of Rolf, and soon got to be very fond of him; and he speedily attached himself to me, and acknowledged me as his sole master. We were inseparable; he followed me everywhere like my shadow; and we soon came thoroughly to understand each other. I have always been excessively fond of boating, fishing, and shooting; and in the Shetland archipelago—in one of the islands of which, close by the sea, we lived—I had ample scope and freedom to indulge in such pastimes.

Rolf was a present from my father. I began his education almost immediately; and he soon showed himself endowed with rare intelligence. He speedily became as fond of sport as his master. I had him under thorough command; and in a very short time he came to understand and obey my slightest wish. To please me was evidently his greatest pleasure; to win my approval and caress, his greatest ambition; and to live with me and for me, he seemed to regard as the final cause of his existence. I encouraged him to swim, and no spaniel was ever a better water-dog. He was pointer, retriever, friend, and companion all in one. Once I had winged a duck of a rare species flying over a small loch. Rolf plunged in, in pursuit; but as often as he was about

to seize the prey, the duck dived. Time after time, this was repeated. My last percussion-cap was expended, and I was therefore terribly mortified at my helplessness. Nothing for it but to trudge home several miles for a fresh supply; so ordering Rolf ashore, I left him in charge of my gun and shot-bag till my return. I knew he would not leave the gun; and I was pretty sure the duck would not dare to leave the protection of the water while the dog was so near.

On my way, it occurred to me how much more convenient it would have been if I could have sent Rolf home for the caps. It might often be useful to be able to send him home with a message; and I forthwith resolved to add another accomplishment to the many he had already acquired. I began with short distances—only a few hundred yards—ordering him to go 'home, home' (repeating the word 'home'). In a short time he perfectly understood my meaning; and after a little, I was wont to send him many miles home with some indifferent message, written on a piece of paper and tied to his collar, just for practice; but occasionally I found it a most useful acquirement. Those at home were instructed to be sure, when he appeared with my message, to pet and praise him, and send him back with a reply of some sort, a note or small parcel, and instruct him to go to his 'master.' I was amazed and delighted at his quickness of comprehension and readiness to obey. Teaching him was the easiest thing in the world. My order, conveyed in the invariable stereotyped formula, 'Home, Rolf, home, quick!' in a very short time came to be instantly and cheerfully obeyed; and the return order, 'To your master, Rolf,' with at least equal alacrity. I little thought that a day would come when I should owe my life to Rolf's faithfulness as my messenger.

Our house, which was on a large island, was situated at the head of a fine bay or fiord, which ran inland some three miles. Right across the mouth of the bay there stretched a small narrow island, which formed a complete natural breakwater, and effectually protected the bay itself from the fury of the ocean waves. Barely half a mile separated the two islands at the nearest points. The smaller island was uninhabited, except by a few sheep and multitudes of rabbits. One fine autumn day I embarked in my little pleasure-boat, and sailed down the bay to the little island to shoot rabbits, Rolf my only companion. Near the extreme point of the island, and just before landing, I caught sight of a Great Northern Diver swimming along-shore. It had never been my good-fortune to shoot one of these magnificent birds, and I was anxious to secure a specimen; so I at once gave chase. It is useless to fire at any of the divers when swimming, unless they are very near, for they are certain to 'dive on the fire,' as the phrase goes; it is a trick they all have. This particular bird was an old and wary fellow, and for a long time I could not get

within range. He would appear for an instant just a few yards too far off, and then dive, while I continued the pursuit in the same direction. I was in this way beguiled a considerable distance round the seaward coast of the island, which is formed of steep precipices, detached rocks or stacks, skerries, and sunken rocks. At last I got a fair chance, and, to my great joy, bagged the diver.

As by this time I was fully half-way round the island, and the light wind, which was off shore, was slightly on the quarter, and the sea perfectly smooth, I kept sailing on with the intention of circumnavigating it. Gliding smoothly and silently along, and just as I was passing a small rock called Skarta Skerry, I caught sight of an otter on its top busily engaged in discussing his dinner. He was within easy range; and to snatch my fowling-piece and give him the contents of the right barrel, was the work of an instant. He was wounded, but not killed, so I gave him the *coup de grâce* from the second barrel. Luffing up, I ran my boat along the Skerry. Seizing the diminutive kedge attached to the end of the long rope which served as painter, I sprang on shore, giving the skiff a little shove off, to prevent her rubbing against the sharp and limpet-covered rock. With sails flapping in the light breeze, she fell off to leeward. I fixed the kedge in a little crevice; but turning to see that the boat was swinging clear and safe, to my horror I observed the other end of the rope running over the bows and dropping into the sea. In some way never accounted for, but most probably by some idle meddling hand, it had been unloosed from the ring-bolt, and in my hurry and excitement I had not observed it. My boat was adrift, and I was a prisoner. In an instant I knew and felt the peril of the situation. It was low-water at the time; but the tide had already turned, the flood was coming in, and at high-water the low-lying rocks of Skarta Skerry, I was well aware, would be covered some feet. Had I been a good swimmer, I should doubtless instantly have stripped, and swum to and regained my boat, or at any rate could easily enough have reached the smaller island, or even our own larger one; but unfortunately, at that time I could not swim at all. The Skarta Skerry was barely fifty yards from a steep smooth precipice of several hundred feet in height, and the nearest landing-place in a little creek where the shore was sloping, was at least a hundred and fifty yards distant. To me in the circumstances, this was an impassable gulf.

I sat down, and tried to think. For a few terrible moments, no hope of rescue or means of escape presented itself to my mind. I daresay some audible expressions of despair burst from me, for I was roused by Rolf laying his paw on my knee and looking up wistfully in my face, as if to inquire what was wrong. 'Ah! Rolf,' I cried, 'you can reach the shore, and are safe enough; but your master will perish miserably. What will they think at home?' His quick ear caught the word *home*, and he was instantly on the alert, as if for orders, and even ran to the water's edge with an eager whine, which expressed as plainly as words

could have done: 'Send me.' In my first excitement, I had not thought of this before; and even now, when there really seemed a gleam of hope in it, the thought of parting from my companion and being left alone on that terrible rock, was dreadful. But what else was there that could be done? 'You are right, Rolf,' I said. 'It is my only chance, and you shall go.' I tore a leaf from my pocket-book, and wrote: 'I am on the Skarta Skerry, boat adrift. Send help instantly, or it will be too late.' Hastily but securely, I wrapped my missive in my handkerchief, which I tied firmly to Rolf's collar, all the time saying to the intelligent creature: 'You must go *home* with this, Rolf, *home*. Now, Rolf, will you be sure to take my message *home* and *quick*?' He was already at the water's edge. 'Come here, Rolf,' I cried. He rushed back to my arms. For an instant I hesitated, and tried to think. 'Yes,' I said; 'it must be so; it is my only chance. Rolf, Rolf, your master is in sore straits; his life depends upon you. Brave dog, good dog! Now, *home*, Rolf—*home*, and *quick*!'

Two bounds, an impatient bark, as though he meant to assure me he knew it was a case of life and death, a plunge, and Rolf was cleaving the water towards the nearest shore. I sat still and silent on my dismal perch, and watched his rapid progress. I saw him approach and gain the rocky shore. I saw him shake himself hastily. I saw him scramble up amongst the boulders, up the sloping path at the head of the creek, and reach the brow of the cliff. For an instant I saw him clear against the sky, and then he disappeared. He had never paused or looked back. And now I felt indeed alone and miserable beyond description. A depression of spirit weighed me down. It happened long ago, and yet, I well remember my thoughts and feelings and fancies as though it had been yesterday. They were too deep and intense to be other than graven on memory as with a pen of iron.

Scarcely had Rolf passed beyond recall, when it occurred to me that it might have been a better plan to have tied a strand of rope to his collar and my own wrist and made him tow me on shore. He could have done it; and I might have reached the rocks alive. Why did I not think of this sooner? But it was too late now; and I feared I should certainly perish miserably. Then I wished the end were come. When it did come, it would be only a brief struggle. But to be doomed to sit there and think, and watch the rising tide for two or three long hours, hope and despair alternately possessing me—it would drive me mad, I said to myself. But I resolutely thrust from me the ghastly picture which fancy conjured up, and tried, as calmly as I was able, to calculate the chances for and against a rescue.

Everything depended upon Rolf. On all previous occasions, when I had sent him home with messages, he had only at most a few miles of hill or moor to traverse. But now he had to cross the smaller island, then cross the sound—nearly half a mile in width, as I have said—and still he was three miles from home. I knew there were many things that might distract, deter, or detain him; and a very short detention would be certain death to me. Suppose Rolf started a rabbit on the way, might he not forget his errand, and pursue?

Then another terrible fear took possession of me. Rolf always rolled and rubbed himself on the grass when he came out of the water. What if my handkerchief got detached, and was lost? What if my pencil-scrawl, soaked with water, became unreadable? But even should none of these things happen, would Rolf be noticed as soon as he reached home? It would need to be as soon. Men, I knew, could not be got at a moment's notice; they must be sent for from some little distance; and after manning the nearest and handiest boat, fully four miles of sea must be traversed ere help could reach me. And there was now left but the slenderest margin for possible delay. The flood-tide had been running for an hour. In three hours at most, the Skerry would be covered. What should I do? I well remember the lines kept recurring to me again and again:

Amid his senses' giddy wheel,
Did he not desperate impulse feel,
Headlong to plunge himself below,
And meet the worst his fears foreshow?

It was not a dream with me, but a terrible reality, and the 'desperate impulse' became well-nigh overmastering. I fought against it with all the strength I could command. Would it not be cowardice? Would it not be suicide? I would not listen to the temptation; I would not think of it, not while there was a gleam of hope, not while reason remained, not at least till the water had risen to my feet. I was no coward. I had often been in positions of utmost peril, when coolness of head, readiness of resource, or promptitude of action, had carried me through; and I rather prided myself on my presence of mind in circumstances of difficulty or danger. I had once been driven far out to sea in a storm. On another occasion, my boat had been swamped. I had lost my way in a snow-storm. I had once been condemned to spend thirty-six long hours of tempest and snow and sleet in the dead of winter on an uninhabited island, when no boat could possibly come with help. But in these and other cases of emergency, I had never lost coolness or courage or hope, for there was always something to do, something that could be done. There was the need and the demand for action of some sort. But here it was very different. Sitting on this terrible rock, perforce so utterly passive and powerless, with nothing that I could do, and little of promise to hope for—the thought and suspense and anticipation were torturing.

I well remember the horrible fascination of watching the water rising inch by inch, creeping, with a cruel, slow persistency, higher and higher every moment. I remember thinking of the Martyr maiden—

Margaret, virgin daughter of the Ocean wave—
bound to a stake, and left to perish by the flowing tide. This and other dismal pictures of the imagination would, spite of all my efforts, force themselves upon my mind. It was the very Valley of the Shadow of Death through which I was passing. Then thoughts and memories of another kind—of the home and friends I should never see more—thoughts too of a more solemn kind, bearing upon the future which comes after death—reflections, retrospections, regrets, hopes, prayers, came thick and fast. Anon my reverie

was interrupted. As I sat there, silent and motionless as the rock itself, a cormorant rose from beneath the water close by, and made for the Skerry, with the evident intention of coming to rest upon it. Catching sight of me when only a few feet off, he instantly dived with a splash. How I envied him! He was at home in the water; and I—oh, fool, fool, to have neglected the art of swimming!

Thus two and a half long hours slipped past; long they seemed—almost a lifetime—and yet all too short. The tide was rapidly rising. Only a small space of the topmost point of the rock now remained above water, and still there was no indications of rescue. Not a sound was to be heard but the ripple and splash of the water, or the wild scream of the sea-gulls overhead. If all had gone well with Rolf, and he had been expeditious, it was fully time—it was something more than time that succour should have come. Rolf had not returned to me, which I was sure he would have done if he had not carried my message home. That was now the only slender thread to which fast-fading hope still clung. And thus another miserable, torturing half-hour passed; and now the water was washing my very feet, and scarce enough rock for a cormorant to perch on was left uncovered. I sprang to my feet with a despairing groan. I looked at the cruel sea, the black frowning rocks, the bright sun, and blue sky. 'O horrible! Will no help come? Must I thus miserably die? so young and strong too! Ah, Rolf! you have failed me in my need!'

But Rolf had not failed me. Standing there with strained senses and bursting breast, just then, I seemed to hear a sound different from the monotonous splash, splash of the waters around me. Was it the sound of oars, or was it only fancy? I held my breath and listened. Again that sound! Joy, joy! I knew it well—the stroke of oars, regular, but more rapid than usual—quick, quick like those who pulled for very life, as indeed they did. Loudly, wildly, half-mad, I shouted my welcome. Another minute, and round the point, scarcely fifty yards from my perch, swept a light four-oared boat, urged on to utmost speed by four stalwart fellows, who knew too well the need there was for it all, and bent to their work with a will; while high in the bow, like a figure-head, with paws on the gunwale, ears erect, and trembling all over with excitement, the first sight that caught my eye was my noble, faithful Rolf! I had done him injustice when, for a moment, I thought he had failed me; and my heart smote me. The instant he saw me, he sprang with a joyful bark far ahead, and swam to me. I took him in my arms all dripping as he was. I was saved, and to him I owed my life! Not his the cause of the delay which had so nearly made the rescue come too late. He had carried my message safely and swiftly home. But notwithstanding that all haste was made, it took a considerable time before a crew of men could be collected.

My darling Rolf lived to a good old age. He has long passed away to the 'happy hunting-grounds.' Since those days of my youth, he has had several successors, but never one to equal him in intelligence and fidelity, never one I loved so well, and never one that so well deserved to be loved and cherished.

I shall only add that, after that day's terrible experience, I lost no time in putting it beyond possibility that I should ever again encounter a like mishap, for I soon became an expert swimmer, and found myself as much at home in the water as Rolf did.

RENOVATING OLD FURNITURE.

BY THE MOTHER OF A FAMILY.

It is a melancholy fact that furniture will grow faded and shabby looking in course of time, notwithstanding all the care and pains one may take for its preservation. Such being my own experience, as I have no doubt it is the experience of all housewives, it gave me pleasure to hear that by means of black paint and a little gold ink, wonderful effects in the way of restoring old chairs and tables might be achieved. Accordingly, I resolved to put the pleasing assertion to the proof, and invested in half a pint of black japan, for which I paid one shilling, a sixpenny bottle of Judson's gold ink, and a paint-brush. Thus provided with the requisite materials, and my children's Christmas card albums from which to derive models for the decorative part of the experiment, I rummaged out an ancient chest of drawers from which all the paint had long been scrubbed, a venerable washstand and dressing-table, a looking-glass, two antique cane-bottomed chairs, and a towel-rail which has been used as a favourite plaything in our nursery for the last half-dozen years. It was truly a motley group. I confess to a feeling of dismay as I surveyed the deplorably antiquated suit on which I proposed to try my skill, and was at first half-tempted to abandon the project, as little better than an absurdity. I made a beginning, however, and gave each of the articles in turn a thorough coating of the japan, and left them to dry. I may say that I was careful to wear a pair of old gloves when using the paint-brush, also to spread old newspapers underneath the various articles before they were painted; for the japan hardens directly and leaves a stain, however quickly it may be wiped, wherever a drop of it has fallen.

The next day I was charmed to find all my despised furniture looking quite renovated, with a smooth black surface, and a general appearance of having suddenly risen in the world. The next part of my experiment now was the decorative one; and after some little time spent in the selection of designs from the Christmas cards, I set to with the gold ink, and was very successful with most of my work. On the looking-glass I made a not unsuccessful attempt to depict *Little Boy Blue*, of nursery rhyme notoriety. *Little Boy Blue* himself turned out rather an artistic failure, being exactly like a tree-stump with a broken branch attached; while an insane-looking cow in a frenzied attitude, and a sheep of decidedly stained-glass aspect, rewarded my efforts to portray those domestic animals. Ferns, sprays of flowers, birds on twigs, moths and beetles, and other Christmas card devices, formed admirable models; and my renovated furniture was so great a success, that I have more than once been taunted with extravagance in 'going in' for expensive suites in black and gold, at a time when business is so dull, and husbands have to work so hard to make both ends

meet. I smile inwardly at such innuendoes, for the whole business has only cost two shillings; while, as to the time expended on the experiment, only five days elapsed from the time of purchasing the paint and brush till the once despised furniture was elevated to the dignity of the 'spare room'; the whole work having been executed in the spare time of a 'mother of a family' who takes a very active share in household duties.

It will thus, I hope, be seen that no very great demand upon either time or talent is made in doing the best one can to keep our household goods and chattels fresh and presentable. A slight faculty which I have for sketching proved very useful to me; but I have since heard that paper birds, flowers, ferns, &c. may be bought at a trifling cost, which are first gummed on to the article to be decorated, and then painted over with the gold ink. I trust that no one who reads this will turn away with the idea that such work is beyond the power of any lady's manipulation. I have honestly related my own experience in renovating things which were supposed to be utterly past using, and can say with perfect truth that a child might easily accomplish all that is here related. In this way, at a cost in money of the most trifling kind, and with but a small expenditure of time and labour, things may be made to all appearance new, and a tasteful and tangible result be obtained, adding to the pleasure which all tidy housewives have in their furniture and other domestic surroundings.

GENTLE INFLUENCES.

VIOLETS, in the leafiest shade,
By their odours are betrayed;
Soft winds, over flower-fields blown,
By their fragrant breath are known;
Dew, by freshened leaves confessed,
Wets unseen Earth's slumbering breast;
Rills, from out the bleak hill-side,
Swell to rivers, deep and wide;
Rivers, flowing fast and free,
Widen to the boundless Sea;
All great things that move the Earth,
To gentle issues owe their birth;
And soft influence still is best,
Bringing comfort, love, and rest.
Sweet domestic love is strong—
Leads to Right, and warns from Wrong;
Kindly whispers mightier prove,
And to loftier action move,
Than the fretful voice of Scorn,
Of Contempt and Anger born.

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2d. To insure return in case of ineligibility, postage-stamps should accompany every manuscript.

3d. MANUSCRIPTS should bear the author's full Christian name, surname, and address, legibly written; and should be written on white (not blue) paper, and on one side of the leaf only.

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